TO THE

COLORED CITIZENS

OF THE

CITY OF NEW-YORK

DEAR FRIENDS:

Will you read this tract? It comes from one of your best and most devoted friends in the United States. Will you read it? Yes, you will. This to you is one of the most important letters you have ever received; when you take into consideration, yourself, your wife, your children, grand-children, and your dear friends, still toiling in the chains of Slavery. Your enemies told me many of your people would not read this *Tract*, I told them, I did not believe you were so unkind. Read it in candour. We wish to tell you, who and what the *Liberty Party* is in the free States, which had about 62,500 votes, this last fall, for the elevation of the free colored people, and the emancipation of the Slaves of this nation.

As early as 1791, petitions were presented by the *Friends*, in Pennsylvania and from this State, to Congress, praying that slavery might be abolished in the District of Columbia, with the internal Slave Trade, and the same was continued down to 1836, or 1837. But they accomplished nothing. Their petitions were read with great respect and referred to the committee on the District of Columbia, for near half a century, in whose keeping they slept, as in a tomb; the Quakers, or Friends, who presented them, were complimented by Slave-holders for their sobriety and love of order, and home these Friends returned, and voted again and *again*, for Slave-holding Presidents, and pro-slavery members of Congress; never withholding their votes from them, and Slaveholders laughed secretly, in derision at their weakness.

But from 1835 to 1840, the Slaveholders discovered a new power, acting in the petitions, on the subject of Slavery, and that men were in earnest; *then* they laid the petitions on the table, and finally, by a rule of the house, in violation of the Constitution, forbid their reception. To go back one moment. In the State of New-York, in 1821, at the time the new Constitution of this State was being made, at and before that time the colored men of this State, had the same right of voting the white man had, and on precisely the same terms. But the majority of the members in Convention from the City of New-York, were afraid if the colored men were put on an equal footing with the whites, under the new Constitution, that in a few years the colored men would be able to cast from 4000, to 5000 votes, and hold that balance of power, in the City elections, between the two parties, and in fact hold offices, the same as white men, and enjoy the same advantages now given to adopted Irishmen, in relation to all sorts of business, which is now licensed by the public authorities. And the enemies of the colored men foresaw, that the kidnapping and carrying back into captivity of fugitive Slaves would cease, and that the colored man would stand like other men, on his real merits. Samuel Young, now Secretary of State, a member of the convention, strained every nerve, in connexion with the enemies of the colored man from this city, to engraft on the Constitution, the odious feature, which was adopted, that no colored man should vote, unless he had an unincumbered Real Estate of the value of $250 00. This

clause of the Constitution was carried in opposition to the opinion of some of the best men in the convention. From that hour, to this, the colored people have been crushed in this State. In the City of New York, the colored people have not over 300 or 400 votes, where they should have 4,000 or 5,000, who would vote as safely for their country as hundreds of thousands who possess this pearl of great price. The colored people of this State would have this moment, from 7,000, to 10,000 votes, and would be treated as other men, but for this fatal provision of the new Constitution.

To return : one of the earliest and darling objects of the Abolitionists, who now constitute the Liberty Party, was to restore the Elective Franchise, to the colored man. There were petitions presented to our Legislature at Albany, in 1838, signed by about 3,000 white petitioners from the central and western parts of this State, praying the Legislature to pass Laws, for the amendment of the Constitution, and abolition of all distinctions, which then existed between the white and colored man, in this State, by Law. And the writer of this tract spent three weeks, of his time at Albany, to aid the object of those petitions. This was done for some time after. The petitioners, many of them, are the men who now belong to the Liberty Party, and for years tried various expedients of questioning the candidates of both parties, to know if elected, whether they would vote to abolish the legal distinctions, between the white and colored man. And this we did, before forming the Liberty Party. But the candidates for Assembly and Congress, would withhold their answers until three, four, or five days, before the election in many cases, and then answer that they were abstractly, in favor of the Liberty of the colored man, voting the same as the white man, or, they had their doubts, and some would answer on a metaphysical hair line, so that no man could tell, what their opinions were. But in whatever way, they might answer, these candidates, if elected, always supposed they owed a higher obligation to the policy of the parties *which elected them*, than they possibly could, to the most exalted justice, or elevated humanity ; and therefore nothing was done, but to abuse and oppress the white abolitionists, for their friendship to the colored man, except to abolish the nine month law, in relation to slaves brought to this State, and grant to the fugitive slave a right of trial, by jury. But nothing was done for the free colored man. The Liberty Party became persuaded they could do nothing effectually, for the elevation of the colored man in the free States, or emancipation of the Slaves, as long as they remained in those slaveholding and pro-slavery parties ; where even the votes of Abolitionists themselves were given, for the candidates of these parties, and tended to rivet the chains of Slavery more closely.

On the 1st of April 1840, the Liberty Party was formed, and candidates for President, and Vice President of the United States, were nominated, by a convention at Albany, held by delegates from the several free States. The Liberty Party *then* and since, nominated candidates for the Presidency of the United States, and candidates for Governors, and Lieut. Governors in the States ; also, for Congress, State Senators, Members of Assembly, Sheriffs, Clerks, and Coroners in the Counties ; Supervisors, Mayors, Assessors, Town Clerks, and all other offices of the Cities and Towns. It is a persecuted, vigorous, truthful and an increasing party, fighting a distinct battle for the restoration of equal rights to the free colored men, and liberty to the Slaves. In 1840, the Liberty Party had in the free States, a few votes less than 7,000 ; in 1841, near 14,000, in 1842, 27,000, in 1843, 56,000, in 1844, about 62,500 votes, for this most glorious purpose ; and relying on the God of eternal justice and mercy, we believe in a very few years, we shall be crowned with complete success, in this most glorious undertaking. Nothing has more distressed and deeply pained the Liberty Party, than to learn, that nearly all the votes of the colored men, in the City of New-York, (men possessing $250 worth of Real Estate,) had been given at the late election, to the

pro-slavery, Whig and Democratic parties, each having a slaveholding candidate for President. It seemed as cruel as the grave, while we the Liberty Party-men, were abused, reviled, mobbed, and called the *Negro Party*, in the middle and western parts of this State, for standing up as the only true friends of the colored men, and refusing to vote for any man, from town clerk to President of the United States, unless he, the candidate, whether elected or not, would do all in his power to abolish slavery in the United States, and restore the free colored man to the same equal rights enjoyed by the whites. I say, it broke our hearts, to think the colored voters of the city of New-York, were voting against *us, and against their own people*, and that their votes were given for slave-holders, and these two great parties, who are oppressing you, refusing you your rights, and fighting *us* with their full power. Brethren, shall this ever be *so* again? shall it be thrown up to us, that you despise us, and will not vote for us? When you have only to think what we have given up, and how *we* consented to place ourselves and our families in a situation to be abused, and insulted, by these parties, for your sakes, and the poor slaves. This is all truth; and whoever endeavors to keep you from acting with the Liberty Party, is the greatest enemy the colored man has in this world. Only let your own judgment act on this subject; where, or when, since the world begun, has there ever before been found, a political party formed expressly for the restoration of the long lost rights of the sons of Africa? You lost your rights by political power, and by political power you must find them! Voting right on this great question of the elevation of the free colored man, and the emancipation of the slave, is one of the most religious and highest of moral duties a man can perform as an individual in this world, as it affects the rights of others. A man voting, or about to vote, is one of the 2,700,000 voters or law-makers, in this land. The President of the United States, members of Congress, Governors, Senators and members of Assembly, are but your agents; you speak, act, and make laws through them. If a man is about to vote, the cry of near 3,000,000 of slaves, and of 500,000 down-trodden free colored men, should ring in his ear, "Oh, remember us, Oh, have mercy on us." The voter should listen to the command of Jehovah, "break every yoke, and let the "oppressed go free"—"love your neighbor as yourself," "do as you would wish to "be done by." Every true Liberty Party man says, "Lord I hear and will obey." And the Liberty Party man, in putting in his vote for all officers, votes for those only, who will do all in their power to elevate and emancipate the colored man, and thereby obeys the command of Heaven. The voter in voting for Liberty Party State officers, says virtually, "I hereby vote that the free colored man be entitled "to vote the same as the white man, and that all legal distinctions between the "white and colored, be repealed by law." This same Liberty Party voter says, in substance, when he puts in his vote for President and members of Congress,— "I vote that a slave is a man, and not a chattle; I vote that the slave has the "best right to himself, his wife, his children, his own and their labor; I vote "slavery be abolished in the District of Columbia; I vote the internal slave "trade between the States be abolished; I vote that Florida and Texas come not "into this Union, except as *free* States, with no fetter on their *soil*; I vote that "the United States guarantee to each State, a republican form of government, "which is an hitherto unfulfilled guarantee, of the constitution, which I vote "be complied with, and thus destroy slavery in all the States; I vote the slave "have a Bible; [now withheld,] I vote that he be permitted to learn to read it, "and have the benefit of God's book and of Christ crucified, as the hope of our "common salvation; I vote each sit under his own vine and fig tree, with none "to molest or make him afraid," and that the colored man be restored to his long "lost rights." In goes the ballot, "it is recorded on earth, it is recorded in Hea- "ven, as a just and a holy vote." The voter has a clear conscience on this "point, living, or dying.

But the man who votes a pro-slavery vote for State officers, for the Whig or Democratic parties, says by the vote, "Let the free colored people bow down "always, and be crushed by the present constitution, and let the wicked iron laws "of this State all remain unrepealed against them."

In voting for slaveholding Presidents, and pro-slavery members of Congress, "he virtually says in voting for the Whig or Democratic parties, "I vote that a "slave is not a man, but a piece of property, a chattle; I vote the slave has not "as good right to himself, as his master, that the slave has no right to his wife, "or his children, if the master wishes to sell them, or gamble them away; I vote "the slave be paid by the *lash*, instead of *cash*, for his labour; I vote he have his "peck of corn a week, and that the master have the right to treat, bruise, wound "and maim him, and even to shoot him, if he attempts to run away; I vote he "have no bible, that he do not learn to read, that he have nothing but abuse and "insult in this world, that the slave trade between the slave States, and in the Dis- "trict of Columbia, be not abolished, that Florida come in as a slave State, and "that the lash cease not, and all things remain as in days gone by."

The vote goes in, and slavery has a new brace put into its edifice, to sustain it, and the northern pro-slavery man has done all he could to strengthen this institution of blood.

New-York, January, 1845.

WILBERFORCE.

THE LOT OF THE SLAVE!

"Work—work—work!
While the master is sunning himself,
And work! work! work!
While the wretch is counting his pelf:
It's O, to be a slave—
A slave under an Arab's hand,—
Where woman has never a soul to save,
If *this is* a Christian land.

O! men, with sisters dear!
O! men, with mothers and wives!
It is not cotton you're wearing out,
But human beings' lives.
Dig! dig! dig!
In sorrow, and sickness, and want;
Digging at once with a feeble hand,
A *grave*—and a hole for a plant.

Work! work! work!
My labor never flags;
And what are my wages? a bed of earth,
A quart of corn, and rags!
To be robbed of my children dear,
To hear them cry in vain;
To see my husband sold like a brute,
Marched off in the clanking chain.

O for one short hour,
O for one resting day,
No moment to feel love's soothing power;
No moment to rest or pray.
A little weeping would ease my heart
But tears away I dash;
My tears must stop, for every drop
Calls down the merciless *lash!*"